

Hello, I'd like to welcome everyone to our webinar today: "Eating Your Way to Wellness." My name is Katie Muhlhammer. I'll be your behind-the-scenes technical facilitator. I'm going to give you a couple of brief housekeeping items. Then I'd like to introduce our presenter, and then I'll let her take over and go through this material for us.

I do want to draw your attention to a couple of resources that we have for you on the left-hand side of your screen. One of those is an "Event Resources" section. We have a copy of the slide deck that the presenter is using uploaded there in a PDF document. We also have a "Portion Sizes" resource that she'll be referring to, and you can download those at any point while you're listening to this.

We also have a section called "Ask a Question"—I'll tell you a little bit more about that at the end—that you can type in a question and send, and that comes to us via e-mail.

Finally, we have an FAQ or "Frequently Asked Questions" section. So as you're getting started with this, if you're running into any issues or technical items, you can take a scroll through that and see if perhaps we have answered your question.

Enough of the housekeeping. We are very pleased to have Stacie Haaga here today with us. She's a registered dietitian nutritionist practicing in Winchester, Virginia. Since she graduated from Virginia Tech and became the RDN, she has explored the role of food in inflammation and autoimmune disease while offering a holistic approach to nutrition, health, and healing in her private practice.

Her professional interests include food allergies, intolerances, and sensitivities; healthy cooking; family nutrition; and weight management. She is currently in the midst of completing a Certificate of Training in Integrative and Functional Medical Nutrition Therapy, as well as a Wellcoaches Health and Wellness Coach certification.

So she's a perfect fit to have as our guest presenter today. I know I've been able to sit in on sessions that Stacie has done before, so you're in for a treat. Stacie, I'm going to go ahead and pass it off to you now.

OK, thanks so much, Katie. It's really a pleasure to be here with you all today. I do enjoy presenting on eating your way to wellness. Obviously, that's my specialty and what I really enjoy talking about. I look forward to sharing some great tips with you today.

Our learning objectives are to really discuss methods of choosing and preparing healthy food, and we're going to talk about some tips for eating healthily on a budget. In the end, we'll have some additional resources to help assist you in developing a plan to eat healthfully. Our goal here is to really give you the tools that you need in order to make some really positive, healthful choices in your life. So let's get started.

Today what I want to start off by doing is focusing on your eating habits on a perfect day. Just take a moment; think about what you're eating on a day when you're feeling really good, when you have lots of energy, you're able to get things done, you're feeling good. What are those foods that you're eating on that day? Just take a second and think about that.

Then I want you to think about your work day, because we've all had them. I hear it all the time: "Oh, man, I've kind of had a bad day yesterday." What is it that you were eating on that day where you felt sluggish, you weren't feeling your best, and you felt like, "Hey, I could do better." What were you eating on that day?

Then I want you to really think about the difference between those, and what eating habits do you want to change based on that? Just take a minute and jot those down, because I want you to come back to those after this presentation and really think about what's the first thing that you can change based on that.

OK, so hopefully you've jotted those down, because now we're going to move into a survey; and Katie is going to help us out with that. The survey question is: "With all of the diets and the latest health crazes, I believe I know which foods are good to eat and which foods should be avoided." Do you agree or disagree?

Thanks, Stacie. I'm going to go ahead and send that survey out. Everyone should see that survey pop up on your screen automatically. Just take a moment to reflect on that, and then go ahead and select whether you agree or disagree. Then once you've closed out of that, in a few seconds you'll be

able to see where the other participants who have listened in to this session—where they fit in this as well.

All right, so I'll go ahead and close that survey and pass that back to you, Stacie.

All right, thank you.

You know, it's really hard these days with all of the information being thrown at us, and if you read *Prevention* magazine or health magazines, one day eggs are bad for you; the next day, they're the perfect food. So it's really confusing to try to know what is the best approach for you. So what we're going to talk about today is not getting mixed up in a lot of the fad diets and really focusing on solid foundations for good nutrition.

This is what you need to know. What we need to think about is the "new" food plate. So we're probably more familiar with the old food-size pyramid that had the fruits and vegetables, milk products, meats. Everything was in a hierarchy, and the base of that was really your grains or your bread. Well since then, the USDA has changed that hierarchy of that pyramid so it looks more like a plate. So when you look at your plate at each meal, this is what it should look like. It's a really great visual tool that you have here.

So you're looking at half the plate as being fruits and vegetables. That's going to give you the antioxidants and the fiber that you need. You're going to have a half a plate or a little less than half the plate be a protein source, which is your meat, your beans, your legumes, your nuts. Then grains would be a smaller portion; and that might be potatoes, rice, roll, pasta. Those are going to be another quarter of your plate, and then of course you have dairy to drink or maybe you have a little cheese sprinkled on some of that. But this is really the new food plate. This gives us a really great visual tool that you can use at every mealtime.

ChooseMyPlate.gov actually has some great plates that you can look at for reference. But these are based on the new dietary guidelines. This helps us make smart choices from each group. It will help you. You can use that tool on the website to help you find a good balance between food and physical activity. Then it will also help you get the most nutrition out of your calories. So we want to go for more nutrients than food.

For instance, a good example of this would be a 95-calorie apple is going to have a lot more nutrition in it than a 95-calorie doughnut. OK, so that's kind of a no-brainer. We know we're going to get fiber and antioxidants and lots of good stuff out of that apple, whereas the same amount of calories in a doughnut is going to leave us feeling pretty empty. It's not really going to contribute to good health. So it's not always as simple as comparing calories. You have to think about the nutrition that you're actually getting out of food. I would say anything plant-based is probably going to be preferable to anything that comes out of a box as far as nutrition is concerned.

Let's talk about some of these recommendations.

The first is to really eat a variety of fruits and vegetables. In particular, these are greens, healthful fruits and veggies. I always recommend eating a rainbow. When you look at your plate at every meal, maybe you don't eat a rainbow at every single meal; but throughout the day, getting a variety of colors is really important. That's going to give us different nutrients. It's going to give us more variety, and so we want the eye to see as many of those colors as possible.

You can do this by buying fresh or frozen produce. Canned is a good option. Don't be afraid of canned. Just look for a lower sodium option if possible or something without salt, or maybe you do your own canning. That's been more popular recently, is preparing your own foods. Growing your own little garden on your back deck is a possibility. So the fast-frozen produce really doesn't lose a lot of the nutritional value, so it's an excellent source of fruits and vegetables. I love having them available all year-round, and it's usually less expensive to have frozen produce. What you really just need to be careful of is any added sugar or salt in any of these items, and I think you'll have a lot of variety in that fruits and vegetables category.

The second recommendation is to really make sure that you vary your protein routine. Protein is very important to health. It helps your body aid with growth and repair. It's important for our immune system. It's important for building muscles. It's important for brain health. Especially in periods of growing, like childhood or pregnancy, protein is really important. You're going to find protein in both animal and plant sources.

I do recommend some animal protein just because it does have nutrients that you can't always get from vegetables alone, and this is where it's so important to have that balanced plate. Too much of anything may not meet your nutritional requirements. So getting protein from meats but also legumes and nuts, eggs, dairy—those are all great sources of protein and should be eaten in a variety of ways.

Third, we want to make sure to choose fiber-rich fruits and vegetables and whole-grain breads. Fiber is really important. It helps keep things moving. It's beneficial for lowering cholesterol. It's helpful for managing blood sugar. So you really want to look at that fiber content. Fruits and vegetables are loaded with fiber; and if you're going to choose bread or some kind of grain product, you want to look at the fiber content on the label. Three grams is a really great goal for fiber. That's just going to help manage that spike in blood sugar that you can sometimes get and helps keep things moving, like I said. You want to aim for 25 grams to 30 grams of fiber per day.

You want to consume no more than 1 teaspoon of salt daily. Now, that's really if you're preparing a lot of your own meals. If you are eating a lot of packaged and processed foods, it is very easy to eat more than 1 teaspoon of salt each day. So really think about that sodium content. I find that when people switch to a more whole-foods-based diet, they really have to work to eat that much salt. So there's a big difference in what you're preparing at home versus what's already prepared. This is something to be aware of based on what you're currently eating.

Then finally, drinking 3 cups of milk, either fat-free or low-fat. Really any kind of milk is a good option, depending on what you like. But you want to make sure to choose milk, cheese, or yogurt. That's really necessary for strong bones and teeth.

So really what we're looking to do is to eat less sodium, eat less saturated fats and fewer added sugars. We're going to talk a little bit more about that; but with all of this, we want to make sure that we're engaging in at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each day. That's important. I think the recommendation is somewhere around 220 to 250 minutes a week. So if you can do that, you're encouraging good health along with these nutrition choices that you'll be making.

Of course if you're not very active right now, I think it's a good starting point to really talk with your physician about what's realistic. Starting with 10 minutes might be a good starting point for you if you're not currently doing that much physical activity, so always talk with your physician about what your plans are. Really, to maintain a healthy weight, just start making these small changes. Start making these changes one at a time and small increases in physical activity.

The typical American diet actually exceeds the recommended intake levels in these four categories: solid fats, added sugars, refined grains, sodium, and saturated fats. We have been called a fast-food nation because of these statistics; and because we have these busy lives, we're dependent on fast foods, which is convenient and inexpensive, and people are running around eating in their cars a lot. Unfortunately, these foods really don't have the nutritional quality that we need, and they're generally just higher in calories but higher in sodium and fats. This habit over the last several years has really led to unhealthy results in our country.

The other piece of this, of course, is that also during the last 20 years, we've had a dramatic increase in obesity. That's what has happened as a result of us going to this more fast-food-reliance nation. So what we're trying to do is reduce the statistics. More than one third of U.S. adults and approximately 17% of children and adolescents are actually obese. That's from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. So that's the typical American diet, which I also refer to as the SAD diet, the standard American diet; and that's really where we're looking to change one thing at a time.

So let's talk about what we call some food foibles. These are some of the culprits that cause a lot of our unhealthy relationships with food—some of those things I just talked about. Portion control is key, and we're going to talk more about that; but let's just start by talking about fats.

You've probably heard about trans fats, and that's what I call a bad fat gone worse. That's when we take a fat that was already unhealthy—we took a liquid fat and tried to make it a solid fat; and in doing that, we just made it very unstable. And that's not good in your body, to have these unstable fats. Foods high in trans fats are a lot of baked goods, a lot of the processed snacks, and things that you're going to find on the supermarket shelves. Now it is listed on the ingredient labels, so you can pick up any

package and see what the trans-fat content is; and I would really work to limit and avoid trans fats if possible.

Now, saturated fats—that we want to consume less than about 10% of our calories from saturated fatty acids. Saturated fats are going to be butter; coconut oil is another saturated fat. Those are fine in some moderation, but what we really want to look for is polyunsaturated or monounsaturated fatty acids, so olive oil and avocado oil and avocados. Those are good choices.

Solid fats are another form of these saturated fats; and really, we want to look to replace some of the solid fats that we eat, like shortening or lard. I would opt for maybe an olive oil—something that's going to have more of those polyunsaturated fats.

So fat is one that can be kind of tricky sometimes; always read the label and look at what is in your package. But if you're just using healthy oils at home, that can be very beneficial and help you feel full. So we don't want to avoid all fats, but just there are better fats than some other ones.

Sugar is another one that tends to sneak into everything. Really it's eye-opening. When I work with people and we talk about, "OK, let's cut out sugar," and people really start looking at labels, it's not as easy as just looking at added sugars on the label. You really have to pay attention to what's in the ingredients section. Sugar has a lot of other names. It goes by—it might be tapioca syrup or brown rice syrup or organic cane syrup; those are all still sugar. So limiting those added sugars can be really beneficial. We want to consume less than 10% of our calories per day from these added sugars.

It makes things taste really good. It's in the cookies and the cakes and soft drinks and candies, but it's also going to be in things like bread and pasta and salad dressing and all of the condiments that you're using. So that can add up really quickly. In my experience when I work with people, we find that sugar really makes you feel anxious; it can make you feel irritable, nervous. The blood sugar swings can be very problematic. If you've ever eaten something really sugary—like maybe you took a doughnut for breakfast—and you find 2 hours later you're starving and maybe a little bit angry, that is when you're having that blood sugar crash. And it can really negatively impact your life. Not only that, but it just causes inflammation in your body. So I'm a big advocate for really limiting that sort of refined

processed sugar in your diet, because I think you'll see a lot of benefits in doing so.

Third we have refined grains. We want to limit refined grains to be no more than half of your total grain consumption. When I say "refined grains," that's a lot of crackers, Nutri-Grain bars, granola bars, that kind of thing. Those are typically refined. We really want to opt for whole grains. There are a lot of whole-grain options: brown rice, millet, oatmeal, quinoa, buckwheat, amaranth, any kind of whole-wheat bread or pasta. Those are better choices than some of the white bread or the white-flour-based processed snacks. So we want to limit those refined grains.

Again, those are going to affect your blood sugar, because they're not going to have that fiber in them. When you eat more whole grains, you're going to have more fiber. That's going to help with all those things I mentioned earlier: reducing cholesterol, managing your blood sugar, and helping you have regular bowel movements, which is more important than we give it credit for. So that's really where you want to focus on your grains.

We talked a little bit about salt. Sodium is good in a good degree. It's really important to maintaining healthy mineral levels in your body. It's important for all of our bodies' functions really. But it's when we have too much sodium that it's a problem; and especially if you have high blood pressure or kidney disease or some other medical conditions, that's really where we need to note how much sodium we're eating.

So if you're eating out a lot at fast food or if you're buying a lot of prepared meals, it's very difficult to limit the amount of sodium that you're getting. You have much more control when you're making your own food. So really, we want to focus on—the magic number is about 1,500 milligrams a day; that's really the recommendation for adults with prehypertension.

So if you're working to reduce your sodium, you can use other flavors, other herbs to flavor your food. I always ask for sea salt over table salt. You typically need a little less sea salt than you do table salt to season things. In doing that, you'll find, "Wow, I really don't need that much to make this taste good." But you have to just play around with it and be very mindful of how much salt you're actually using.

Caffeine. Now, a lot of us—gosh, frequently that's the first thing people say to me: "I can give up anything but my coffee" or "but my iced tea." So caffeine, we have very strong feelings about. Generally, I don't tell people that they have to give it up; but I think it's important to recognize that moderate consumption. You want to have around maybe two cups a day. Once you start drinking coffee in the afternoon, it really can affect your sleep. It can affect your anxiety level. So I do recommend moderate consumption of caffeine in the morning along with the healthy eating, avoiding the added sugars that come with a lot of the caffeinated drinks. Like if you're drinking Coke and other soft drinks, you're really just getting sugar out of those.

And of course when you're trying to get pregnant or are breastfeeding, you may want to limit some of your caffeine. But you can find caffeine in coffee, cocoa, tea. Some sports drinks and those energy drinks of course have caffeine in them. So over-the-counter medications can also have some of those; and, of course, Excedrin or headache medicines typically use caffeine. So it's just something to be aware of and sort of find that right balance between how much coffee you're drinking. Do you maybe need to adjust that in order to get better sleep so you don't need as much coffee?

Sometimes it can take a few days, maybe a week, to sort of decrease the amount. But I always tell people, just start with 1 tablespoon at a time. If you need to decrease your caffeine intake, you don't need to go full turkey: 1 to 2 tablespoons a day less, and kind of work backwards that way.

Then finally, alcohol. That can kind of get us in trouble. It is a nervous system depressant; and, obviously, it can be abused by many people, and it certainly affects our energy level and our mood. I would also say that a lot of people tend to make poor food choices when alcohol is in the equation and maybe eat a little bit more than they would otherwise. So it's just something to sort of step back and look at: How frequently are you drinking alcohol? Excessive alcohol use can really lead to a lot of health problems, and so it doesn't offer a lot of nutrition—really just empty calories.

Right now, the current guidelines for Americans recommend no more than two servings a day for men and one for women. So that's about—that's like a can of beer or 12 ounces of beer; that might be 5 ounces of wine or 1.5 ounces of some kind of hard liquor or distilled alcohol. So really keep that in mind on a daily basis. If you find yourself drinking every night, that can

affect your sleep. It will affect your energy level, and it is a depressant. So really just evaluating where you're at compared to the recommendations is a good place to look at maybe where some empty calories are coming in, too.

We're going to talk a little bit about portion sizes, which is also important here. We've got a couple of examples here just to give you some good visuals. A cup of green salad would be about an adult-size fist. Using a tea bag to look at tablespoons is helpful. And then this one is always disappointing to people when I tell them that 1 ounce of cheese, which is a serving size of cheese, is the same as a pair of dice. Most of us can eat a whole lot more cheese than that, but that is really the lesson in the serving size. It's a pair of dice.

There is a portion-size handout, so I think that's really helpful to look at to really gauge where am I at with portion sizes. Some of these it's easy to eat a little bit more than the recommended amount. I always recommend starting with maybe a little less than a serving size and just give yourself a few minutes to let your brain and your belly talk. Figure out if you actually want more before you grab another serving. Just let your brain and your stomach talk. Sometimes just slowing down is all you really need to make good choices when it comes to these portion sizes.

Now we're going to talk about some tips for eating healthfully on a budget. I like this a lot, because, really, the cost of food is one of the biggest challenges that a lot of my clients face when it comes to making healthful food choices, because they feel that it's expensive to eat healthy. But when you shop the perimeter of the grocery store and you skip some of the aisles, you'll find you can actually afford a lot more food than you maybe thought. So let's talk about how to do that.

The first thing to do is to eat less meat. The way that I look at it is when you're thinking about what you're going to have for a meal, instead of thinking about the meat that you're going to eat—the chicken, or we're going to have chicken or beef—my kids always say, "What's for dinner?" and I say, "Chicken." But what I realize is that we should really be focusing on half the plate as fruits and vegetables. So maybe it's next time we're having kale and broccoli with chicken on the side.

In reducing your meat, you're going to reduce your overall grocery bill, because as you know, meat can be very expensive. It can add up, especially if you have a family where you are feeding lots of mouths. You need that protein; and, like I said earlier, there's a lot of great nutrition that comes from meat. But consuming a little bit less will help to reduce your overall grocery bill.

Grains and legumes do have protein, so that's where you can focus on getting some of that nutrition that you may be forgoing by reducing your meat. There's some great nutrition in there. It will help you feel full. Beans and legumes do have fiber; they have protein. So they're a really great meat substitute. I think even if you can do that two nights a week, you are cutting down your grocery bill. Switching to maybe a vegetarian bean-based dinner would be beneficial to your wallet.

Buying in bulk is also another great way to save money. It doesn't feel that way when you're checking out at Costco or Sam's or another bulk store; it feels like you're spending a lot of money, and you sort of have to make that investment up front. But if you know how to properly prepare and store food in bulk, you can really save a lot of money. That could mean having a freezer, maybe having some extra storage space in your closet. The bulk prices are going to be cheaper, and that's going to allow you to purchase more of what you need and want. Then, the nice thing is you have it available. When you need it, you have more food available; and you don't really have to go shopping as frequently either.

The fourth tip is to make smart choices in organic produce. One thing that people are surprised to hear me say is you don't need to buy everything organic. What I recommend is really looking and thinking about your fruits and vegetables. Do they have a thin skin? If they're thin-skinned, then they probably should be purchased organic. The Environmental Working Group does have a list called the "dirty dozen." You may have heard of it. The dirty dozen is the vegetables and the fruits that have tested highest in pesticide residuals, and those are listed on the slide here. If you think about it, those vegetables and fruits have very thin skin.

So I wouldn't waste my money on organic bananas or even organic oranges; they're going to have a thicker peel. Really look at those thin-skinned vegetables, and that's where you need to maybe put some more money into organic. If you can't do it all the time, that's OK too. You make

choices every single time you go to the grocery store. Eating fruits and vegetables of any kind is better than not eating them just because they're not organic. And I do like frozen produce for that reason, because you can get a good deal on organic produce that's frozen.

Now, if you do buy nonorganic produce, just use a pesticide wash. That will help you save money too. You can get sprays in the produce department that are effective.

Then buying locally can be a great way to stretch your dollar. Going to the farmers' market if something is in season—sometimes they have an overabundance, and they're marking it down. So look at what is seasonal and local to help save money.

Along those lines, you can get involved in a community-supported agricultural program. CSA is a great way to also try some new produce, and basically a local farm will sell you a share of all of the produce. So every week you get this box of produce, and that's really great to try new foods. Sometimes you might get a box of zucchini, and then you have to be pretty creative about what to do with that zucchini for a week. But a lot of times you'll have leftovers where you can store them; like I said, you can maybe do something and freeze that. So it's a great way to stretch your dollars.

Eating seasonally is along those lines. If it's seasonal, it's going to be less expensive. Buying strawberries in January—those strawberries are going to be expensive, because they've probably been imported from somewhere, and that's going to cost some money. So if you aren't sure about seasons, you can Google it; and there are some great calendars out there that will tell you what is in season and when.

Preserving your own produce—oh, growing your own produce, I'm sorry. Growing your own produce can be very easy, even in a container box. You can do some great things on just the deck or outside your front doorstep if you don't have any space—if you don't have a big yard. And then preserving produce when it's cheap; or if you've grown it, that's a great way to take advantage. I bought a really simple drying rack on Amazon. It was like \$7, and it just can hang in a closet. You just lay out your food on the mesh rack, and I've preserved some herbs that way and other things. So preserving it will help you stretch your dollar.

And then forgoing processed foods. These things seem less expensive; but really, you're losing out on nutritional value, and the health implications can in fact be more expensive if you're not taking care of yourself and eating these foods. You can make a lot of really great foods in your kitchen very easily and very quickly for less money.

OK, so we've come upon another survey here: "How often do you eat out, including takeout?" Let's go ahead and see where everyone's at there.

Thanks, Stacie. I'll go ahead and send that survey out to everyone. You should see that pop up, so just take a moment. We've got five different categories for you: daily, a couple times per week, once per week, every other week, or once a month or rarely. So you want to select which option applies to you, and then you'll be able to see the survey results from the other participants as well.

All right, I'll close that survey and get it back to you.

OK, thanks.

Like I mentioned earlier, a lot of us are eating fast foods because we need something fast. Now, I would say the best thing to do is really think about your day in advance and plan for those nights when maybe you're running around between activities or you want to go to the gym but you always do something after work. Really plan for those times if you can. But if you haven't, then let's look at some healthy fast-food options.

Most fast-food meals contain about 1,000 calories for one meal. So that's a good chunk of your daily calories. If you're eating three of those a day, then you're definitely eating more calories than you need in most cases. So some recommendations for eating fast foods:

- Really try to avoid the super sizing.
- Order items that are grilled.
- Try to avoid fried foods.
- There are a lot of great salads out there now that you can get.
- If you're getting a baked potato or some kind of—I don't know—topping, you want to kind of avoid a ton of sour cream or mayonnaise,

butter, cheese, and bacon. That's really where a lot of the calories sneak into these fast foods.

- And then order smaller portions; don't supersize. If you really want fries, just order the small serving. Get your fill. I was talking with a group of three or four coworkers. They would go to McDonald's; they would get a large fries, and they would all share it. Everybody got a few french fries, and that was all they needed.

So you have some options; so think about sharing, or think about some of these other healthier options when you're going out. Really, I typically use the grocery store as my fast food when I haven't prepared the way that I should have. Sometimes I just run into the grocery store and either go to the salad bar or grab some produce or maybe something else that I can find, just to kind of tide me over until I get home anyway.

There are some good healthier meals on the go. I don't really need to read through these, but you see there are some lower sugar, lower sodium, lower saturated fats. You just have some smarter choices here: going with grilled things, choosing the yogurt instead of the milkshake. Those are going to be better options for you when you're out and about on the go.

Now let's say you're going to a sit-down restaurant. There are a lot of people who sometimes eat out for work, and it's sometimes unavoidable. Sometimes it's business and social, and these are places that you need to go in order to do your job. So you can do a few things. Either bring the food in is an option, or you can order your food to go where you're not necessarily having to eat it all at the restaurant table. People find they eat less this way and aren't as tempted to finish those large portions when they're not eating in a restaurant.

Drinking water before you go. A lot of times, we confuse hunger with dehydration. A lot of times we think we're hungry, and we're really just thirsty. So I recommend drinking water throughout the day; but really, if you're going to be eating out, try to hydrate a lot before you go. Not to mention, a lot of those foods are going to be higher in sodium; so you're going to need a little bit more water afterwards too.

Don't be afraid to ask the wait staff about ingredients that are in a dish that you want to consider. Know what you're getting before you get it. You can

be that person. Nobody wants to ask these questions, but it's OK; other people at your table might want to know, so don't be afraid to ask those questions. Tell your server to leave off bread or chips—the extras that they serve you. You can ask for sauces on the side so that you can use them in moderation.

And then look for main dishes that are roasted, broiled, blackened, grilled, or baked. Those are going to be better options than a fried main dish. Choosing rice or a baked potato or steamed vegetables as the side dish is another way to get more nutrition out of your meal. So if you have a choice between french fries or steamed vegetables, go for steamed vegetables for the fiber and the antioxidants.

And then really just watching your portion size. A 9-inch plate is what we should be eating from. If it's much bigger than that, you probably have enough for two meals. So at that point, you can share the meal or take some home with you. But don't feel compelled to always be eating everything on your plate at that moment. If you really love it, you can always take it home with you and have it for lunch the next day.

The other thing to consider is maybe a salad bar option, which is great because you have lots of vegetables to choose from and usually some proteins in there too. So use the smaller plate. Really limit the number of refills that you're getting. One plate is probably enough. You want to fill up on the dark green leafy vegetables, like spinach and lettuce. And don't be afraid to eat a lot of those vegetables, because those are sort of gimmes. Those are sort of like the free foods that you really can't overeat: cucumbers, peppers, broccoli, tomatoes. There are no limits on that. Five to nine cups a day is the recommendation, and most of us are very far from meeting that goal.

But we want to watch out for the croutons and the chow mein noodles and the cheese crackers and the bacon bits that are up there too. That can derail your good attempts to make a healthy choice. Those things are going to just derail you. So just be mindful of those. Be mindful of the dressing you choose. Olive oil and vinegar is a great option; it's a really healthy oil, and it will give you a lot of flavor.

Then for dessert, maybe just look at what the free options are instead of the double chocolate cake over on the side. Fruit can be great; it's something sweet, and it's a great way to end the meal.

Here are some great tips for busy people who need to maybe eat on the go or maybe have things at home, at the office. Stock up on some of these healthy snacks. Go with instant oatmeal without sugar. I would avoid the flavored kind. If you need a little sweetness, maybe you bring a little bit of maple sugar or maple syrup; it might be another option that's a natural sweetener. Raisins or other dried fruit is a great way to sweeten up your oatmeal. Again, look for low-fat, high-fiber crackers. You can pair that with tuna or chicken pouches, which is really convenient to have. You don't even need a can opener.

So planning your meals ahead of time is really the key to success in making these changes. But the planning and preparation is going to be essential to making some of these changes.

Pack a lunch. This is going to help cut down on that caloric intake. And maybe it's not every day. If you're eating out every day, maybe you should start by packing a lunch one day a week and then work up from there. Remember, start with small goals.

And then I like to take Sunday afternoon and really think about what I'm going to eat—or maybe even Saturday so I can go shopping on Sunday. But just plan for those meals and prepare them on the weekend or the week ahead.

I typically have a lot of questions about diets. I don't really work with diets necessarily; I work with lifestyle changes. Really what I recommend is you don't want to go on a diet that you can't do forever, and most of the fad diets out there are not things that you can do forever. So when you're reading the information on the Internet, like we all do, you really just want to look at the source. Is it reputable? Most universities have some good information; that would be reputable. The Academy of Nutrition Dietetics is a good resource. The Mayo Clinic is a good resource. Think about, are these established institutions? That's helpful for getting some of this information. These places are going to give you more lifestyle changes and dietary guidance that is more sustainable rather than a fad diet.

We talked about this a little bit earlier with the MyPlate, but this is a great resource on the MyPlate website. It just gives you a checklist that helps you identify like the food group targets based on your calorie needs. It's going to help you personalize it a little bit based on your age and sex and height and physical activity level. So this just gives you some good guidance, helps you plan out your meals. I would use this when you're thinking about what you're going to eat and what your grocery list looks like.

Of course you can always speak with your physician or your dietitian if you have specific dietary concerns. I would say if you have a medical condition, it's a good thing to discuss any kind of nutrition changes with a professional who understands those medical challenges that you might have.

Here are some of those resources: great tools on Choose My Plate. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics has some helpful primers on there. And then the President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition has a great handout there to take a look at. That kind of can get you started. Sometimes too much information can be overwhelming. So I like you to start there and make some of the small changes that we've talked about.

Now is a good time to write down two ways that you can achieve a change in your eating habits based on what you learned today. I recommend you really think about what is realistic for you and what's achievable. Think about, is it a small change; is it a big change? If it's a big change, let's break it down and try to think about, "What are the small changes that I can make to get there?" It doesn't all have to be done at one time. Take a minute and think about that.

All right, I am going to hand it over to Katie now to talk about final resources. Of course it has been a pleasure to talk with you today, and hopefully you have come up with one to two things that you can do based on information you've learned today and based on where you're at right now: things that you can do to improve your quality of nutrition and your healthy lifestyle. Thank you so much.

Thank you very much, Stacie, for sharing your time with us today. We, as Stacie said, trust that you've been able to pick up just a couple of things maybe and just start with just one or two things to make some healthier eating choices. Thank you so much, Stacie, for sharing your background and all of this information and tips with us.

Just a reminder, you have your Employee Assistance Program available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you do not have the contact information for your EAP, your Human Resources Department has that; you can just ask them for that. Whether it's related to wellness assistance as you're seeking to make healthier choices; perhaps you're dealing with the loss of a loved one, looking for some bereavement counseling; maybe some child care issues—just a lot of different life things that your EAP can help you with. So please call us; we're here 24/7 to help you.

Then a couple final housekeeping items as we close out today. Just a reminder, you do have in the "Event Resources" section on the left side of your screen a couple of resources: the portion-size examples that Stacie talked about, as well as a copy of the slide deck. So you can come back and refresh and pick up some additional tips after the fact; we have those for you.

We also have an "Ask a Question" section. You're more than welcome to send us a question; type it in and send it. We will receive it via e-mail and then get back with you. It typically takes just a couple of days, depending on the nature of your question. We will get back to you via e-mail on that. But again, just remember your EAP is here 24/7 to help you.

So thank you, everyone, for joining us. We trust you found this helpful. Thank you again so much, Stacie.

Take care, everyone.